



June 6, 2014

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-14-45

SUBJECT: LTP–Environmental Quality Incentives Program–Fiscal Year 2014 Drought Recovery Funds

Action required by: June 30, 2014 (Field Offices [FOs])
August 1, 2014

Action required by: August 22, 2013 (Area Offices [AOs])

Action required by: July 14, 2014 (State Office [SO])

Purpose: To provide guidance for administering the Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) drought recovery funds

Expiration Date: September 30, 2015

Background

National headquarters has allocated drought recovery funding under EQIP to eight states including Kansas. State conservationists must ensure that conservation practices (CPs) using EQIP financial assistance will support efforts that will mitigate short-term or long-term drought relief for producers. Drought recovery funds in Kansas will emphasize assistance to producers with degraded plant condition or livestock production limitations due to inadequate water concerns.

Eligible Land Uses, Resource Concerns, and CPs

The eligible land uses, resource concerns, and CPs are available in Attachment 1.

State Allocation and Fund Code

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Kansas has received an allocation of \$300,000 for FY2014 and one statewide Program Contracts System (ProTracts) fund code named “Drought Recovery” will be available.

(more)

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It shall be documented in Form NRCS-CPA-6, Conservation Assistance Notes (CPA-6 Notes) that the producer requested the application be moved from EQIP General–Grazing Lands Health (GLH) to the drought recovery fund code.

Once an application has been moved to the drought recovery fund code it may not be moved back to a fund code that has passed the initial deadline for funding decisions.

Screening Criteria

FOs must utilize the state screening criteria in Attachment 3.

Eligible Kansas counties are identified in Attachment 4.

All eligible applications must have an assigned priority of “HIGH,” “MEDIUM,” or “LOW” recorded in ProTracts.

Documentation that the application was previously ranked but not approved for FY2014 EQIP–GLH must be included in the case file.

There shall be no changes to the resource concerns being addressed when moving an application from EQIP–GLH to drought recovery.

High Priority Category–The application was eligible for the 2014 EQIP General–GLH fund code and is in a Kansas county with intensity of D4 (Exceptional Drought) per the U.S. Drought Monitor dated May 27, 2014.

Medium Priority Category–The application was eligible for the 2014 EQIP General–GLH fund code addressing the resource concern of Degraded Plant Condition– Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health or Degraded Plant Condition–Excessive Plant Pest Pressure, and is in a Kansas county with intensity of D3 (Extreme Drought) per the U.S. Drought Monitor dated May 27, 2014.

Low Priority Category–The application was eligible for the 2014 EQIP General–GLH fund code addressing the resource concern of Livestock Production Limitation– Inadequate Water, and is in a Kansas county with intensity of D3 (Extreme Drought) per the U.S. Drought Monitor dated May 27, 2014.

ProTracts Ranking Tool

National ranking questions are consistent for all EQIP applications. Refer to Bulletin KS300-14-16 for additional guidance on answering national questions.

A copy of the state and local ranking questions are provided in Attachment 2.

All national, state, and local ranking questions are identical to the EQIP General–GLH category for FY2014. When ranking an application in the Drought Recovery fund code, refer to the

ranking worksheet previously generated for the application in EQIP General–GLH and select the same answers.

The Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI) will not be used for the drought recovery fund code.

Additional Requirements

- The unit of concern will be converted to a grazing plan during the life of the contract that will:
 - On range, achieve 50 percent or less use for the year on the key forage species in identified grazing areas.
 - On pasture or hay (crop), meet electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG) requirements for regrowth by the end of the growing season.
- On native range, producer will implement a monitoring system using grazing exclusion cages approved by the NRCS that will verify the degree of use of the key forage species in identified key grazing areas, in the defined or planned grazing system, for the life of the contract.
- Cropland converted to grazing land will make up no more than 20 percent of the application acres to be eligible for this ranking category.
- Permanent boundary fencing will be present prior to any financial assistance being paid on any grazing land CP.

Application Periods and Deadlines

Although applications for EQIP are accepted continuously there will be no additional application evaluation period cutoff date for drought recovery funds. Existing EQIP applications that met the cutoff date of November 15, 2013, for EQIP General may be considered for drought recovery funds.

- FOs will complete application rankings by **June 30, 2014.**

Note: Conservation planning should already be completed for the application and minimal changes needed due to moving from EQIP–GLH to drought recovery.

- AOs will ensure that conservation plans, application ranking, and reviews of ranking have been completed prior to funding decisions.
- The SO will make funding decisions by **July 14, 2014.**
- All approved applications and documentation will be entered in electronic contracts (eContracts) by **August 1, 2014.**
- Assistant state conservationists for field operations (ASTCs-FO) will ensure that all contracts have been obligated in ProTracts by **August 22, 2014.**

The regional conservationist shall review and obligate all approved applications of \$150,000 or greater as outlined in Bulletin KS300-14-41. The ASTCs-FO shall submit questionnaires to the appropriate program manager as soon as possible to meet program deadlines.

Contact: Forward questions through established channels to Chad G. Volkman, Resource Conservationist, at chad.volkman@ks.usda.gov or (785) 823-4580.

(Signed)

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments